

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) An apparatus for providing e-mail notification to a user of an interactive television system, the apparatus comprising:

a customer premise equipment capable to receive an e-mail message from a data communication network and transmit an alert signal in response to receiving the e-mail message; and

a portable communication remote-control device independent of for the interactive television system to allow a third party to communicate with a user, wherein the portable communication device is further to receive the alert signal and to provide notification to a user in response to the alert signal without displaying the e-mail message.

2. (original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the communication device comprises one of a pager, a telephone, and a portable stereo device ~~customer premise equipment includes a set top box.~~

3-27. (canceled).

28. (currently amended) An article of manufacture, comprising:

a machine-readable medium having stored thereon instructions to: receive, by a customer premise equipment, an instant message from a data communication network;

in response to the received instant message, send an alert signal to a portable communication remote-control device independent of an ~~for an~~ interactive television system; and

in response to the alert signal, provide notification by the remote control device about the received instant message without displaying the instant message.

29. (currently amended) An apparatus for notifying a user of an interactive television system about an incoming instant message, the apparatus comprising:

means for receiving an instant message from a data communication network;
communicatively coupled to the receiving means, means for sending an alert signal in response to the received instant message; and

communicatively coupled to the receiving means, means for allowing a user to engage in at least two-way audio communication with a third party ~~remotely controlling the interactive television system that provides notification about the received instant message in response to the alert signal.~~

30-36 (canceled).

37. (new) An apparatus for providing e-mail notification to a user of an interactive television system, the apparatus comprising:

a customer premise equipment capable to receive a message from a data communication network and including a transmitter capable to transmit an alert signal in response to receiving the message; and

a telephone including a receiver capable to receive the alert signal indicative of the received message, the telephone to provide notification to a user in response to the alert signal.

38. (new) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein the message includes an email message.

39. (new) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein the message includes an instant message.

40. (new) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein the telephone includes a cellular telephone.

41. (new) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein the telephone includes a cordless telephone.

42. (new) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein the notification includes a light signal from the telephone.

43. (new) The apparatus of claim 42 wherein the remote control device includes a specifically-designated LED to provide the light signal.

44. (new) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein the notification includes a sound signal from the telephone.
45. (new) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein the notification includes vibration from the telephone.
46. (new) The apparatus of claim 37 further comprising a television communicatively coupled to the customer premise equipment and capable to display the received message.
47. (new) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein the customer premise equipment includes a set top box.
48. (new) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein the telephone is incapable of displaying the message.
49. (new) A method of notifying a user of an interactive television system about incoming messages, the method comprising:
- receiving, by a customer premise equipment, a message from a data communication network;
 - in response to the received message, sending an alert signal to a telephone;
 - and

in response to the alert signal, the telephone providing notification indicative of the message without displaying the message.

50. (new) The method of claim 49 wherein the customer premise equipment includes a set top box.

51. (new) The method of claim 49 wherein the message includes an email message.

52. (new) The method of claim 49 wherein the message includes an instant message.

53. (new) The method of claim 49 wherein the telephone includes a cellular telephone.

54. (new) The method of claim 49 wherein the telephone includes a cordless telephone.

55. (new) The method of claim 49 wherein the telephone provides notification indicative of the message without displaying the message.

56. (new) The method of claim 49 wherein providing notification comprises providing a light signal from the telephone.

57. (new) The method of claim 49 wherein providing the notification comprises providing a sound signal from the telephone.

58. (new) The method of claim 49 wherein providing the notification comprises providing vibration from the telephone.

59. (new) An apparatus for providing e-mail notification to a user of an interactive television system, the apparatus comprising:

a customer premise equipment capable to receive a message from a data communication network and including a transmitter capable to transmit an alert signal in response to receiving the message; and

a portable stereo device including a receiver capable to receive the alert signal indicative of the received message, the portable stereo device to provide notification to a user in response to the alert signal.

60. (new) An apparatus for providing e-mail notification to a user of an interactive television system, the apparatus comprising:

a customer premise equipment capable to receive a message from a data communication network and including a transmitter capable to transmit an alert signal in response to receiving the message; and

a pager including a receiver capable to receive the alert signal indicative of the received message, the pager to provide notification to a user in response to the alert signal.